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perience of her playing knows well enough beforehand. That is the only praise that need be awarded to her, and it is the highest possible.

The grouping of the pianoforte songs was excellently arranged. Those which produced the most impression, or at least those which were redemanded (the two things are not identical), were No. 3 in A, from the first book; the "Spring Song" in A, book 5; and No. 4, in G, book 5.

These interesting and charming performances, for the sake of amateurs, practical students of the pianoforte, and the public in general, ought to be continued without delay.

ART MATTERS.

I had occasion last week to speak of the advancement of art among the people of this country. This week I wish to say a few words upon the wrong direction which most of our newspaper art criticism is taking.

By criticism we understand the unprejudiced judgment of works of art; a judgment entirely unbiassed by friendly or unfriendly feelings, devoid of personality, and looking at a work upon its merits only. How much of the newspaper criticism now extant comes up to this standard? The great fault with the majority of our critics is, that they use the columns of their papers to serve a friend or spite an enemy—the first may, perhaps, have painted a good, the second a bad picture; but, be the case as it may, the friend is served, and the public mind, by this meretricious course, led to form a wrong and, in nine cases out of ten, entirely unjust opinion of the merits of a thoroughly capable artist.

Our critics do not appear to fully appreciate the importance of the duty devolving upon them. Do not seem to realize that with them, to a great extent, rests the duty of guiding the public mind and taste into the proper channel. Do not understand that, by pursuing their present course, they are evading a great duty and doing lasting harm to American art. That public opinion is almost entirely guided by newspaper criticism nobody will deny. The fact is patent. Many a reputation has been made and many blasted by it. There is no arrogance or assumption, therefore, in saying that the critic occupies one of the most important positions in the community; that his influence is almost unbounded. Possessing this influence, it is all the more to be deplored that we so often see it applied to unworthy objects. That we see the critic receiving fees for criticism. (?) That we find him forgetting his manifest duty and expending fulsome flattery for friendship or for money. Yet all this, to the shame of the press be it said, we find. Men possessed of real critical acumen prostituting their talent to the advancement of some particular clique in art, with whose principles they have no genuine sympathy, but who,

being personal friends, they deem it their duty to "write up."

Hazlitt, the great dramatic critic, made it a rule never to be acquainted with an actor; holding that it was impossible to speak justly of a personal friend; that the sharpness of criticism must be, of necessity, blunted by friendship; and, above all, that he owed a duty to the public, and that duty could never be justly performed should he write in a mere feeling of friendship, rather than of true, just, and unbiassed criticism. A good story is told in this connection of Cooper, the great English actor. When Cooper first came up to London his first object was to become acquainted with Hazlitt, knowing his power as a critic over the public mind, and with this end in view he succeeded in obtaining a letter of introduction, from a personal friend, to the redoubtable critic. Behold our hero, with elated heart and elastic step, proceeding to the residence of the great critic with the valuable epistle in his pocket. Hazlitt has been made acquainted with his projected visit, and when the actor knocks at the outer portals he is denied admission—"Mr. Hazlitt is particularly engaged." For one week does Cooper dangle his heels upon Hazlitt's door-steps; until at last (the critic wearied by his importunity) down comes this message: "Mr. Hazlitt makes it a rule never to become acquainted with actors. You will be judged according to your merits."

Golden words; words that should be graven upon the mind of every true critic, and be posted in a prominent position in his *sanctum sanctorum*. Here is the very gist, the spirit of genuine criticism. Judge a man by his merits, and by his merits only, throw overboard friendship, feeling, obligation—there is a duty to be performed—perform it truly, fearlessly—never heed the cavilling of the world, but write as your own innate sense of right and wrong may direct—you may be ridiculed, laughed at at first, set up as a dolt and a bigot, but in the end you must triumph, there is too great a sense of seeing fair play among our people ever to allow you to stay at the foot of the ladder, and when in course of time you are discovered to be honest in your opinions and just in your criticism, you will see those who have maintained their exalted positions by a more facile pen or readier wit than yours, but who have been guided by personal feeling only, sinking into oblivion, while truth and justice triumph.

Another great fault in our criticisms is the undue severity with which our painters are criticised. They should be petted, encouraged, not bullied into improvement. We are in no position as yet to think of surpassing Europe in art. True, we have made giant strides towards improvement; but these strides have been made under the high pressure, hot-house system; our improvement is

not of altogether healthy growth—to a great extent we are little more than imitators. We are slowly forming a school, but as yet we must look to Europe for models—Europe, the cradle of art to which all nations look. It is hardly fair, then, that American art and artists should be judged from the same standpoint as those of the Old World. We may compete with them, may receive medals, but, save in landscape, cannot, at present, with any justice expect to rival them. Let the critic, then, instead of comparing and placing such and such an artist beside one of European reputation, rather show him his faults in a kindly manner, let him understand the task he has before him; let him see that it is better for him to form a distinctive style of his own, rather than imitate those of foreign growth; and, above all, let not this be done in a coarse, blatant manner, but, rather as a kind mother instructs and encourages her child, leading him through tenderness alone to do the things which are right and proper.

Let us have no more of this assumptive Yankeeism—"America can do this" and "America can do that"—in art America is as yet but a mere child in arms compared to Europe,—let this truth be plainly understood by the artists; not to discourage, but to invite them to a healthy emulation and earnest desire to attain that position, which, by study and perseverance alone, they can ever hope to reach.

To conclude, let us do away with "hobbies." Let it not be said of us that one of the largest papers in the Union is devoted, in its art department, to a theory of art false in its principles, and meretricious in its effects upon the advancement of art in this country. Let the critic, seeing that he is in the wrong, gracefully acknowledge his error and ignore his false views in the future. Let us, one and all, strive by an outspoken utterance of the truth, to instruct and elevate the people to a just appreciation of American art—placing it on no higher nor lower level than it deserves—treating every artist fairly, irrespective of style, personal feeling, or prejudice. Then may we say, in the words of Hazlitt, "You will be judged according to your merits," and American newspaper criticism will no longer be looked upon, as a thing that can be purchased at so much the square inch.

PALETTA.

When Rossini was 14 years old, he conducted at the rehearsal of an opera which he had composed. Among the musicians in the orchestra was his father. All at once young Rossini got uneasy and listened attentively, because a false note struck his ear. Looking round, he found that his father had played that note. "Was that you?" said he, "you had better go home!" And his father, delighted with the genius of his son, left the theatre.